

JACKSON CITIZEN PATRIOT (ML.)
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OPG 1 SALT

CIA-01 Turner, Adm.

'Help' offer is suspicious

Chinese Vice-Premier Deng Xiaoping (Teng Hsiao-Ping) said last week China would consider helping the United States monitor Soviet compliance with the terms of SALT II.

He said China might be willing to operate monitoring stations along its border with the Soviet Union. The United States would furnish the technology. China would operate the stations and share the data.

The Chinese do not have the know-how to set up the posts themselves. Thus American agreement to the proposal would amount to a gift of highly sophisticated equipment and technical knowledge to China.

The loss of American listening posts in Iran makes the idea of setting up new posts in China attractive, but we would be shocked if the administration accepted Deng's version of it.

According to Deng, the posts would be operated exclusively by the Chinese. How the operators would be kept honest is not clear.

The question of verification is one of the biggest raised by the proposed SALT agreement — one that must be answered to the satisfaction of an increasingly skeptical public if the treaty is to be ratified.

The administration insists that SALT is verifiable, although as usual, administration spokesmen are making conflicting statements. CIA director Stansfield Turner is worried about losing the posts in Iran, while Secretary of Defense Brown said it would take the Soviet Union longer to violate the treaty than it

would take the United States to verify compliance.

Opponents of SALT can be expected to attack the verification question much as retired Adm. Elmo Zumwalt did during an interview in Jackson last week.

The administration's assurances of the reliability of verification procedures are, in Zumwalt's estimation, "pure deceit." Zumwalt, who believes SALT II would be much worse than SALT I in the advantage it would grant the Soviet Union, said there are "huge gaps" in the ability of the United States to verify compliance.

Anyway, he added, "even a perfectly verifiable bad agreement is still a bad agreement."

We don't necessarily agree with Zumwalt's assessment of the treaty and the philosophy behind it. The principle of negotiated arms control between the world's two military giants is worth pursuing, despite its obvious frustrations and potential pitfalls.

But, based on the information the administration has made available so far, we share — in principle if not in degree — Zumwalt's concern about the reliability of existing verification measures.

We are being asked to accept much on faith. If, as Sen. John Glenn, D-Ohio, has suggested, the administration is seriously considering China's proposal, that faith is weakened.

If Chinese-run monitoring stations are necessary to make SALT II enforceable, the treaty's foundation is, indeed, very shaky.